

MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY WITH BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS¹

BETH SULZER-AZAROFF

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS, AMHERST

Beyond the pain and suffering they cause, occupational injuries cost billions of dollars annually. As a result, business and industry have begun to recognize the importance of safety to any successful operation. Research has repeatedly demonstrated that applied behavior analysis can reduce unsafe practices and accidental injuries at work. *Behavior Analysis Training for Occupational Safety* is a manual designed to put such scientific findings into practice.

Behavior Analysis Training for Occupational Safety focuses on "behaviors that prevent accidents and promote employee health" and consists of three separate small volumes: a basic conceptual text, a discussion workbook and a practice workbook. Adhering to the sage advice of Confucius, "Tell them and they'll forget. . . . Show them and they'll remember. . . . Involve them and they'll understand" (p. v), the authors use well-established behavioral procedures to tell, show, and involve trainees in the process of learning and applying the concepts.

The basic text contains eight chapters. These include the rationale for behavior analysis; the ABC approach to intervention (emphasizing in one chapter "activator" strategies and in another, the use of consequences); and testing and evaluating safety programs. Chapter 7 extends beyond the usual realm of behavior analysis into cognitive and social psychological factors, and Chapter 8 is devoted to program implementation. Also duplicated in each of the three volumes are a preface, notes to the

trainee and trainer, objectives for each chapter, a glossary, and a list of suggested readings.

The purpose of the discussion workbook is "to prompt thought and application of behavior analysis in the employee's own work setting" (p. vii). Lessons include reviews of the main concepts presented in the basic text, instructions designed to evoke written responses, and sets of provocative discussion questions. The practice workbook aims toward increasing trainees' learning of behavior-analytic principles by using application exercises to show them how to use those principles in their own work settings.

Each of these intentions is met reasonably well. Certainly fundamental behavior-analytic concepts and principles are included. The stimulus materials in the discussion and practice workbooks should promote generalization of the key concepts and principles to the trainees' own circumstances. How effectively this "bibliotherapy" will accomplish its ultimate purpose of reducing accidental injuries, however, can be determined only by extensive use and careful evaluation of the training materials. The thoroughness of the content, preparation of the trainers, and comprehensibility of the text and exercises will undoubtedly influence the outcome.

Any thorough evaluation undoubtedly will result in a revision of the package. In addition to content updates, a new edition probably will include a stronger emphasis on illustrations of actual applications of the job safety model presented, additional methods for identifying valid performance targets and evaluation criteria, inclusion of goal setting, and a tighter relation between chapter objectives and instructional content. In addition, adjustments in language are needed to make the manual more uniform, as are other stylistic modifications (e.g., precise citations and terminology, refined usage, etc.) that a seasoned copy editor would suggest.

¹ Review of: Geller, E. S., Lehman, G. R., & Kalsher, M. J. (1989). *Behavior analysis training for occupational safety*. Newport, VA: Make-A-Difference, Inc.

The author would like to convey her thanks to Lenore Azaroff for her editorial assistance. Correspondence and requests for reprints should be addressed to Beth Sulzer-Azaroff, Department of Psychology, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Massachusetts 01003.

Because of its many positive features, this initial package is likely to help trainees improve safety at their job sites. Not only are readers taught to identify and set priorities for safety objectives, how to analyze behaviors in terms of their “activators” and consequences, to design and apply feedback and reinforcement effectively, and to evaluate outcomes, they also are cautioned to take many steps essential

for supporting the longevity of the programs they design. Any effort that promises to help prevent accidental injury is a big step in the right direction.

Received September 15, 1990

Initial editorial decision October 15, 1990

Final acceptance May 5, 1992

Action Editor, Andrew L. Egel